

Lymphocystis Disease

Lymphocystis is a common, chronic and benign infection caused by an iridovirus that results in uniquely hypertrophied cells, typically in the skin and fins of only the more advanced orders of fishes.

Signs and pathologic changes

Lymphocystis is a terminal infection of individual cells, and the effect on the host is generally slight. The virus is typically dermatotropic and superficial; the condition is much like that of warts, in that the lesions are macroscopic and occur mostly at the periphery of the vascular system.

Behaviour

Infected fish behave normally but extensive growths can slightly affect swimming. Among fish in confinement, and conceivably in the wild, the protruding clusters of cells lead to aggression and cannibalization of the lesions.

External signs

Cauliflower-like lesions on body surface, including mouth region, fin and tail region

Host and geographic range

Occurs in freshwater and marine species. Global distribution – Europe, British Isles, North America, Australia, Africa, Central America, Japan.

Susceptible species include herrings, smelts, batfishes, killifishes, scorpion fishes, basses, sea basses, sunfishes, perches, snappers, drums, goatfishes, scats, butterfly fishes, cichlids, damselfishes, wrasses, gobies, rabbitfishes, flounders, porcupine fishes, etc.

Occurrence of lymphocystis in Asia:

Reported among ornamental fish (*Scatophagus argus*), pond-cage cultured seabass (*Lates calcalifer*), grouper fingerling in Thailand; wild snakehead in the Philippines (see photo 1), flounder in China (see photo 2).

Control/Treatment:

No known method of therapy or immunization.

Avoidance – is the universal control measure; infected fish should be removed from population; improve water quality; stocking density should be decreased because transmission is through direct contact.

